

Department of State

2023 PLAIN WRITING ACT COMPLIANCE REPORT

Overview:

This report describes the Department of State's compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. The purpose of the Act is to improve the effectiveness and accountability of federal agencies to the public by promoting clear government communication that the public can understand and use.

By improving understanding of agency requirements, plain writing improves legal and administrative compliance.

As a foreign affairs and national security agency, the Department uses plain writing to improve our communication with our diverse workforce and the American public as we advance U.S. foreign policy objectives abroad.

The Assistant Secretary for Administration, known as "A" in the Department, is the senior official responsible for overseeing the Department's implementation of the Plain Writing Act. The Office of Directives Management in the Office of Global Information Services in the Bureau of Administration has responsibility for compliance activities.

2023 Summary:

In 2023, the Department used new and innovative ways to raise awareness of and improve compliance with the Plain Writing Act. This was the first full year the Department had a Plain Writing Manager overseeing the program resulting in new milestones and accomplishments. Provided below is a summary of the program's accomplishments, training updates, ongoing initiatives including updates to public and internal Department websites, and an appendix with Department plain writing tools and resources.

Plain Writing Accomplishments in 2023

- Completion of a Department-wide plain writing exercise titled "Jargon Mania." In this
 exercise, employees nominated their least favorite jargon terms and the 32 most
 nominated terms were placed in a tournament style bracket.¹ Employees voted for
 their least favorite jargon terms over five rounds of voting until "Not/Not" was crowned
 the worst jargon term in use for 2023. Employees cast 4,522 votes over the five rounds.
- Production of a short video that introduces employees to the Plain Writing Act and encourages them to use plain writing principles in all communication. This video was distributed to all Department employees and is available at https://www.state.gov/plain-writing-at-the-department-of-state/.

¹ See appendix for Jargon Mania bracket with all 32 jargon terms.

- Issuance of 11 Department-wide notices reminding employees to employ plain writing principles, notifying employees of available plain writing training, and increasing awareness about plain writing.²
- Review and revision of the FAM writer's guide, which is the guide used by those who draft content for the Foreign Affairs Manual³, to ensure that the guide incorporates the use of plain language and encourages writers to adopt the use of plain language principles.
- Each year, an annual review of the content of the Department's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) is performed. A public version of the FAM can be accessed at FAM.state.gov. The 2023 Annual FAM Review incorporated the requirement to use plain writing in creating FAM content. This expectation was outlined in a notice to all Department staff, where links to guidance on the use of plain writing were also provided.⁴

Training and Procedural:

- Creation of a one-hour training session titled "The Principles of Plain Writing" which was
 offered 11 times in 2023 and attended by 2,196 employees. For a better customer
 experience, this training was offered live in all 24 global time zones so that more
 Department employees could attend.
- Provided four sessions of plain writing training to bureau representatives who
 coordinate drafting content of the Foreign Affairs Manual. Sixteen employees
 completed the training, representing 76% of the responsible bureaus.
- Coordinated with an external training vendor for two plain writing training sessions covering 30 supervisory GS-13 and GS-14 employees in the Bureau of Administration .
- Provided plain writing training to offices within the following Department bureaus and overseas posts:
 - Bureau of Administration,
 - Bureau of Diplomatic Security,
 - Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs,

² See appendix for text from the 11 notices.

³ The Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) is the single, comprehensive, and authoritative source for the Department's organization structures, policies, and procedures that govern the operations of the State Department, the Foreign Service and, when applicable, other federal agencies. For more information, visit https://fam.state.gov/.

⁴ See appendix for the text of this notice.

- Bureau of Information Resource Management,
- Bureau of Overseas Building Operations,
- U.S. Mission Brazil.
- Collaboration with the Foreign Service Institute, the Department's official training organization, to draft a plain writing training module which will be included in a newly developed in-person course to help develop mid-career skills.
- The Foreign Service Institute continues to offer multiple writing courses that include plain writing principles, including an hour-long, distance-learning course entitled 'The Plain Writing Act.' Ten employees completed the course in 2023.
- The Foreign Service Institute is developing a writing center through the School of Professional and Area Studies. The center will support writers across the Department through the promotion of successful writing skills at any point in the writing process. It will be a central hub for all Department of State employees to improve their writing skills through online resources, virtual consultations, workshops, and other ongoing events.
- The Department continues to update templates and drafting guidance, supplemented by training sessions, to standardize the process of drafting communication for Department principals. One recent change is that documents intended for Department principals must now be drafted in Calibri 15-point font rather than Times New Roman. Calibri font improves recognition for individuals who use Optical Character Recognition technology.

Ongoing Actions for Compliance:

Public and Internal Department Websites:

- A plain writing webpage of the Department's public-facing website continues to be available to the public at https://www.state.gov/plain-writing-at-the-department-of-state/.
 - Public comments continue to go to PlainLanguage@state.gov.
- Continuous updates to the public-facing Department of State website (www.state.gov) reflect adherence to plain writing principles, including:
 - Section headings listed as tabs at the top of the page so that users do not need to scroll down the page to see all section headings;
 - Succinct sentences under 15-20 words including:

- "The FAM and FAH govern how we do our work."
- "Watch career ambassadors and employees discuss our work in this video series."
- "We organize countries and areas into six geographical regions, each corresponding to one of our six "regional" bureaus. Learn more about each below.";
- Visual media that complements the text;
- Ample use of white space as a visual aid.
- Department personnel have access to a plain writing internal webpage that contains:
 - A one-page quick reference guide on plain writing principles for Department employees;
 - A list of in-person and distance writing courses available from the Foreign Service Institute, the Department's primary training institution;
 - Several years of the Federal Plain Writing Report Cards produced by the Center for Plain Language;
 - Previous Department compliance reports
 - The Federal Plain Writing Guidelines; and
 - Other plain writing resources developed by the Plain Language Action and Information Network and the National Archives and Records Administration.

Contact Information for Plain Writing at the Department of State:

Alden Fahy, Program Manager for Plain Writing, is the point of contact for Plain Writing at the Department of State and can be reached at PlainLanguage@state.gov.

Appendix

Jargon Mania Bracket



Department Notices

Plain Writing at the Department of State 01/26/2023

The Center for Plain Language (CPL) is a non-profit organization which helps government agencies and businesses write clear and understandable communications that meet the requirements of the Plain Writing Act of 2010.

Each year, the CPL evaluates public facing websites of Federal agencies to determine if those requirements are being met.

The Department of State recently received a grade of "A-" from the CPL for the writing quality of two of its public facing web pages. This is a dramatic

improvement over the previous year's grade of "C." The Department also received a grade of "A+" for organizational compliance.

The results of the 2022 Federal Plain Language Report Card, including a list of the websites reviewed, are available at https://centerforplainlanguage.org/2022-federal-plain-language-report-card/.

To further the plain writing goals of the Department and improve employee awareness of plain writing requirements the Office of Directives Management will conduct a virtual training session titled "The Principles of Plain Writing" on January 30 at 10:00 a.m. EST. This session is open to all Department employees, and registration is not required.

The Department's Plain Language Program is part of Global Information Services in the Bureau of Administration. Please email PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions or to share plain language best practices.

Jargon Mania 03/06/2023

Jargon is defined as <u>"the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group,"</u> or <u>"obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words."</u> To put it differently: words or phrases used by a certain group that are difficult for others to understand.

This March, to increase awareness and reduce the use of jargon at the Department, the Office of Directives Management (A/GIS/DIR) will be hosting a Jargon Mania tournament.

The tournament will consist of a bracket starting with 32 nominated jargon terms which will compete against each other on a weekly basis until the "most frustrating" jargon term is crowned the winner!

On March 13, the 2023 Jargon Mania tournament will begin. Between now and March 9, please submit examples of jargon that you have encountered while working at the Department that you believe are the "most frustrating" (e.g., the most difficult to understand, the most overused, or the most obscure). These terms will populate a tournament style bracket with the 32 most nominated jargon terms.

Please use this link to nominate up to five jargon terms: https://forms.office.com/g/VZufixzJxN.

On March 13, A/GIS/DIR will post the bracket containing the 32 most disliked words or phrases and open the voting to all Department employees to see which jargon terms will advance to the next round of 16. Four more rounds of voting which begin on March 20, March 27, April 3, and April 10 will then determine the "most frustrating" jargon term in use at the Department for 2023.

Additional instructions, examples, and a timeline for this exercise can be found here: https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx. This site will also be updated weekly with bracket results.

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires federal employees to write clear, concise, and well-organized documents when communicating with the public. Jargon makes written and spoken communication more difficult to understand and confuses readers.

Please contact Plaintanguage@state.gov with any questions.

<u>Jargon Mania Week 1 - Voting Open</u> 03/13/2023

Voting is now open for Week 1 of the 2023 Jargon Mania tournament!

As a reminder, the tournament consists of a bracket starting with 32 nominated jargon terms which will compete against each other on a weekly basis until the "Most Frustrating" jargon term is crowned the winner!

The bracket with the 32 jargon words or phrases most nominated by Department employees has been posted at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

Please vote for the jargon terms that frustrate you most using this link https://forms.office.com/g/AJcxABWcNX.

The current round of voting will end on March 16, with the top 16 most disliked words advancing to the next round.

Voting will occur on the following schedule:

Week 1 - Round of 32, March 13 through March 16.

Week 2 - Round of 16, March 20 through March 23.

Week 3 - Round of 8, March 27 through March 30.

Week 4 - Round of 4, April 3 through April 6.

Week 5 - Championship, April 10 through 13.

On April 14, the winner will be crowned the "Most Frustrating" jargon term in use at the Department for 2023.

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Please contact Please contact PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions.

Jargon Mania Week 2 – Round of 16 03/20/2023

Voting is now open for Week 2 of the 2023 Jargon Mania tournament!

16 jargon terms were eliminated last week leaving 16 other terms competing to be the "Most Frustrating" jargon term of 2023.

The bracket with the remaining 16 jargon words or phrases that received the most votes last week has been posted at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

Please vote for the jargon terms that frustrate you most using this link https://forms.office.com/g/FhgwZFyR1w.

The current round of voting will end on March 23, with the 8 most disliked words advancing to the next round.

Voting will occur on the following schedule:

Round of 16, March 20 through March 23. Round of 8, March 27 through March 30. Round of 4, April 3 through April 6. Championship, April 10 through 13.

On April 14, the winner will be crowned the "Most Frustrating" jargon term in use at the Department for 2023.

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<u>Jargon Mania Week 3 – Round of 8</u> 03/27/2023

Voting is now open for Week 3 of the 2023 Jargon Mania tournament!

The 8 jargon terms still competing to be the "Most Frustrating" jargon term of 2023 are:

- Circle Back
- Out of Pocket
- Deliverable
- Alibi
- Hot Wash
- Foot Stomp
- Fulsome
- Not/Not

The full bracket has been posted at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

Please vote for the jargon terms that frustrate you most using this link https://forms.office.com/g/ekjpksYQgW.

The current round of voting will end on March 30, with the top 4 most disliked words advancing to the next round.

Voting will occur on the following schedule:

Round of 8 - March 27 through March 30.

Round of 4 - April 3 through April 6.

Championship - April 10 through 13.

On April 14, the winner will be crowned the "Most Frustrating" jargon term in use at the Department for 2023.

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makes written and spoken communication more difficult to understand and confuses readers.

Please contact Please contact Please contact PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions.

<u>Jargon Mania Week 4 – Round of 4</u> 04/03/2023

Voting is now open for Week 4 of the 2023 Jargon Mania tournament!

The 4 jargon terms still competing to be the "Most Frustrating" jargon term of 2023 are:

- Circle Back
- Alibi
- Hot Wash
- Not/Not

The full bracket has been posted at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

Please vote for the jargon terms that frustrate you most using this link https://forms.office.com/g/c0CfDw9knC.

The current round of voting will end on April 6, with the 2 most disliked words advancing to the championship round.

Voting for this round will close on April 6 and the championship round will run from April 10 through 13.

On April 14, the winner will be crowned the "Most Frustrating" jargon term in use at the Department for 2023.

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires federal employees to write clear, concise, and well-organized documents when communicating with the public. Jargon makes written and spoken communication more difficult to understand and confuses readers.

Please contact Please contact Please contact PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions.

<u>Jargon Mania Championship</u> 04/10/2023

Voting is now open for the 2023 Jargon Mania championship!

Will "Alibi" or "Not/Not" be the most frustrating jargon term at the Department in 2023?

Place your vote using this link https://forms.office.com/g/Y1EnywS8nR.

The full bracket has been posted at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

Voting will close on April 13 and the winner will be crowned on April 14.

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires federal employees to write clear, concise, and well-organized documents when communicating with the public. Jargon makes written and spoken communication more difficult to understand and confuses readers.

Please contact Please contact PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions.

<u>Jargon Mania Champion: Not/Not</u> 04/17/2023

Not/Not is the 2023 Jargon Mania Champion!

Not/Not frustrates more Department employees than any of the other 32 jargon terms nominated for the 2023 Jargon Mania tournament. Not/Not received the overwhelming majority of votes over Alibi in the final round of voting.

The final bracket has been posted at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

As a final alibi, let's leverage the synergy from this exercise and move the needle by not/not using jargon when we take the pen on Department paper. FYSA: keep tracking this space next year when we circle back to do a deeper dive. Ping PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions.

Plain Writing Training Available

05/01/2023

Thanks to everyone who participated in selecting "Not/Not" as the Jargon Mania Champion for 2023! To see the final bracket for Jargon Mania 2023, please visit https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Jargon-Mania-2023.aspx.

Now that the 2023 Jargon Mania Champion has been crowned, the Office of Directives Management (A/GIS/DIR) would like to urge Department staff to use writing that not only avoids jargon, but also adheres to the Plain Writing Act of 2010 requirement that federal employees write clear, concise, and well-organized documents when communicating with the public.

To meet this goal, A/GIS/DIR is offering opportunities to attend the virtual training session titled "The Principles of Plain Writing." Sessions will be held on the dates and times below including two to accommodate overseas posts:

- May 2, 9:00 p.m. EST;
- May 4 at 9:00 a.m. EST;
- May 10 at 6:00 a.m. EST; and
- May 11 at 11:00 a.m. EST

These sessions are open to all Department employees, and registration is not required.

Please use the following login information for these training sessions:

Tuesday, May 2 at 9:00 p.m. EST

Webinar topic:

The Principles of Plain Writing

Date and time:

Tuesday, May 2, 2023 9:00 PM | (UTC-04:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Thursday, May 4 at 9:00 a.m. EST

Webinar topic:

The Principles of Plain Writing

Date and time:

Thursday, May 4, 2023 9:00 AM | (UTC-04:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Wednesday, May 10 at 6:00 a.m. EST

Webinar topic:

The Principles of Plain Writing

Date and time:

Wednesday, May 10, 2023 6:00 AM | (UTC-04:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Thursday, May 11 at 11:00 a.m. EST

Webinar topic:

Principles of Plain Writing

Date and time:

Thursday, May 11, 2023 11:00 AM | (UTC-04:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

The Department's Plain Language Program is part of Global Information Services in the Bureau of Administration. Please email PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions or to share plain language best practices.

<u>Plain Language Evaluation of Department Websites</u> 06/06/2023

The Center for Plain Language (CPL) is a non-profit organization which helps government agencies and businesses write clear and understandable communications that meet the requirements of the Plain Writing Act of 2010. Each year in September, the CPL evaluates public facing websites of federal agencies to determine if the websites meet the requirements of the Plain Writing Act.

Content managers of Department websites should review their sites to ensure compliance with the Plain Writing Act. Changes made to comply with the Act must be completed by August 30.

For information on how the CPL grades websites and to review the 2022 Federal Plain Language Report Card, please visit https://centerforplainlanguage.org/2022-federal-plain-language-report-card/.

For best practices on writing for the web, please visit:

- plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/web and
- Section IV of the Federal Plain Language Guidelines available at https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/.

The Department's Plain Writing Program is part of Global Information Services in the Bureau of Administration. Please email PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions or to share plain language best practices.

Plain Writing Training Available 07/14/2023

Are you drowning in jargon? Swimming in passive voice? Confused by circumlocution? Then you should learn about plain writing!

The Plain Writing Act requires federal employees to write clearly and concisely. To help increase awareness of plain writing requirements, the Office of Directives Management (A/GIS/DIR) created this <u>short video</u> as an introduction to the Plain Writing Act.

A/GIS/DIR is offering six plain writing training sessions to help employees write clear, concise, and well-organized documents.

The sessions, titled "The Principles of Plain Writing," will be held on the dates and times below. We have included a broad range of times to help accommodate overseas posts:

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July 17, at 9:00 p.m. EST;
July 18, at 10:00 a.m. EST;
July 26, at 2:00 p.m. EST;
August 1, at 9:00 p.m. EST;
August 3, at 11:00 a.m. EST; and
August 8, at 6:00 a.m. EST.
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These sessions are open to all Department employees and contractors.

Please use the following links to register for these training sessions:

July 17, at 9:00 p.m. EST

July 18, at 10:00 a.m. EST

July 26, at 2:00 p.m. EST

August 1, at 9:00 p.m. EST

August 3, at 11:00 a.m.

August 8, at 6:00 a.m.

The Department's Plain Language Program is part of Global Information Services in the Bureau of Administration. Please email PlainLanguage@state.gov with any questions or to share plain language best practices.

Writer's Guide

AUGUST 10, 2023

Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM)/Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)

THE OFFICE OF DIRECTIVES MANAGEMENT
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EFAM@state.gov

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Section 1: Writing Concepts

- a. When writing new or revised material for FAM and FAH, you are providing instructions and guidance for the reader. Your instructions and guidance may address topics such as:
 - (1) Carrying out a law, Executive Order, or provision of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR);
 - (2) Accomplishing a task or making a decision; or
 - (3) Understanding why some action is required and when an exception can be granted.
- b. Write in plain language, as if you are talking directly to the reader. Put yourself in the place of the reader. Ask yourself, "What do I need to understand?" Then write the answer to that question. What you write should be clear, concise, and easily understood.
- c. Each subchapter should describe its overall purpose. Define what the subchapter intends to accomplish. Be clear on the intent. Write with the goal to save time and effort for the federal government and citizens affected by the directive.
- d. List the specific legal authorities relevant to your subchapter. However, to avoid issues as to whether the list is exclusive, include the preface "Authorities include:" preceding the list. For statutes, include U.S. Code citations where available. Create hyperlinks so the reader can go directly to the authorities if necessary. See section 4.4 for details on adding hyperlinks.
- e. Let the reader know what discretion is available to accomplish the intent of the subchapter, what authorities exist to make exceptions and use this discretion, and which person or entity (e.g., by title or office name/symbol) is authorized to approve this exception. This is critical. If the reader has no discretion, then say so, and identify any legal or policy authority constraining the reader's actions.
- f. Link responsibilities to a person (by title) or entity (by office name/symbol).
- g. Include contact information for readers who do not understand the information, or who wish to seek additional guidance. The preferred method is a hyperlink to an office e-mail box established for that purpose (see section 4.4). If this is not feasible, provide the name of the program office. Keep this information current.
- h. The Office of Directives Management (A/GIS/DIR) offers templates and analyst assistance to help you format your document.

- i. Remove unnecessary gender specific language. An example of this type of language would be the use of the term "his/her" in FAM content. All policy content should be reviewed to identify gender specific language. If gender specific language exists, the office of origin should coordinate with A/GIS/DIR to have it reviewed.
- j. Generally, your document should contain the following sections if they apply:

Subject	General topic you intend to cover
Policy and	Describe what you intend the reader to do
objectives	
Scope and	Describe to whom and under what circumstances
applicability	the instructions and guidance apply.
Authorities	Cite statutes, Executive orders, etc., that are the sources of the directive.
Individual	Describe the authority the individual exercises in
authority and	carrying out his or her job (for example, "The
responsibilities	budget management officer certifies funds for
	payment"). This individual authority derives from
	policy authorities above. Indicate in this section
	whether the reader has discretion to deviate from
	the instructions. See section 2.3 for details on
	which auxiliary verbs to use as you draft.
Definitions	Define terms that do not have clear or obvious
	meanings.
Specific headings	The reader may have to cite all or part of your
for the subject	directive. Use headings to break up subject
matter	matter and divide instructions and guidance into
	smaller paragraphs.

Section 2: Drafting Standards

Section 2.1: Subchapter: FAM's Basic Unit

The FAM's basic unit of publication is the subchapter. When making changes to an existing FAM or FAH, review the entire subchapter and bring it up to existing guidelines for content and style. You should also update references and links to ensure that they are accurate and relevant.

Section 2.2: Use Plain Writing

a. Use plain writing to improve the reader's comprehension. However, you have discretion to deviate from plain writing when the following applies:

- Using the language of authorities (laws, Executive orders, treaties, etc.);
- (2) Using prior FAM text that has a meaning defined by court decision, other adjudicatory body, or longstanding Department usage; and
- (3) Technical material designed specifically for subject-matter experts such as consular officers, security agents, information management officers, human resources specialists, budget and financial management officers, etc.

b. Principles of plain writing include:

- (1) Pronouns as subjects—whenever possible, use the second person "you." ("You" may be implicit, as it is in this paragraph.) Be certain the reader understands to whom a pronoun refers. Use a noun if a pronoun would be ambiguous;
- (2) Voice—Use active voice (e.g., "The executive office grants extended leave requests.") rather than passive voice (e.g., "Extended leave requests are granted by the executive Office."). Passive voice often leaves unstated one of the critical regulatory questions—who is responsible for taking action or who received the action (e.g., "Extended leave is authorized.");
- (3) Verbs—Use the simplest form of a verb. Use strong verbs to drive the desired action required in a sentence. Avoid weak verbs that need the support of additional modifiers. For example, "The GSO assists the ICASS council" is short, direct, and preferable to "The GSO provides assistance to the ICASS council";
- (4) Precise verbs—Precision is critical when writing FAM directives. Use definitive verbs to avoid misinterpretation. In some cases misinterpretation of FAM provisions could lead to lawsuits against the Department;

NOTE: See section 2.3 for examples of precise verbs.

- (5) Avoid unnecessary words that cause confusion. When choosing your words, pick familiar or frequently used words over unusual or obscure words. Also, use the same term consistently for a specific thought or object. Common sources of confusion include:
 - (a) Two different terms used for the same thing (e.g., car, vehicle, auto, conveyance—choose one);
 - (b) Giving an obscure technical or legal meaning to a word commonly understood to mean something different (e.g., defining "car" to include trucks);
 - (c) Strings of nouns forming complex constructions (e.g., surface-

water quality protection procedures); and

- (d) Pronouns that don't clearly refer to specific nouns.
- (6) Word placement—to reduce ambiguity, keep subjects and objects close to their verbs. You can easily confuse the reader if you put a word in the wrong place in a sentence. For example, "Only the ambassador can authorize extended leave" and "The ambassador only can authorize extended leave" can have different meanings. In the first sentence the ambassador is clearly the sole official who can "authorize extended leave." But in the second sentence the meaning is ambiguous, and the reader could conclude that the ambassador's authority is limited to approving "extended leave" versus other types of leave. In addition to the word "only," be careful when placing other modifiers, such as "always" and "just";
- (7) Sentence length—Keep your sentences as short as possible. The ideal maximum is 15 to 20 words. For clarity and better understanding, consider breaking long sentences into lists or tables;
- (8) Address one person, not a group Remember that even though your document may affect a thousand people, you are speaking to the one person who is reading it. When your writing reflects this, it's more economical and has a greater impact.

Confusing plural	Clearer singular
Individuals and organizations wishing to apply must file applications with the appropriate offices in a timely manner. You must apply at least 30 days before you need the certification.	a. If you are an individual, apply at the State office in the state where you reside.b. If you are an organization, apply at the state office in the State where your headquarters is located.

In addressing a single person, you can avoid awkwardness by using "you" to address the reader directly, rather than using "he or she" or "his or her."

Confusing plural	Clearer singular
The applicant must provide his or her mailing address and his or her identification number.	You must provide your mailing address and identification number.

- (9) Visual presentation—Consider using visual presentation techniques, such as:
 - (a) Informative headings: The best-organized document will still be

difficult for users to follow if they can't see how it's organized. An effective way to reveal your document's organization is to use informative headings. Use headings to help develop your document's structure. It's often useful to start writing your document by developing the headings and aligning them to your audience's concerns. Headings should not be so long that they overwhelm the material in the section itself (also see section 3.2):

- (i) Don't use vague or nondescript headings, such as "general" or "training." Instead, create headings that provide a synopsis of what information follows, such as "Telegram Submission Requirements" and "Transferring Maintenance Responsibilities";
- (ii) You may also use questions (such as "How many hours of training must I have?") for headings if they make it easier for your readers to find information;
- (iii) Section headings should be concise and clear.

(b) Short sections:

- (i) Short sections break up material so it is easier to understand. Long, dense sections with no white space are visually unappealing, and give the impression your document is difficult to understand. Short sections appear easier to comprehend, and help you organize your document more effectively; and
- (ii) Short sections also give you more opportunity to insert informative headings in your material. Remember that section headings give your reader the best roadmap to your document. Long sections that cover multiple topics are impossible to summarize meaningfully in a heading. When you write short sections, each heading can give the reader information about the entire contents of the section.
- (c) One issue per paragraph: Limit each paragraph or section to one topic to make it easier for your audience to understand. Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence that captures the essence of everything in the paragraph. Putting each topic in a separate paragraph makes your information easier to digest; and
- (d) Vertical lists: Vertical lists highlight a series of requirements or other information in a visually clear way. Use vertical lists to help your user focus on important material. Vertical lists:

- (i) Highlight levels of importance;
- (ii) Help the reader understand the order in which things happen;
- (iii) Make it easy for the reader to identify all necessary steps in a process;
- (iv) Add blank space for easy reading; and
- (v) Are an ideal way to present items, conditions, and exceptions.
- (10) Tables: Use tables to display complex relationships more clearly. Their arrangement helps both writers and readers sort out multiple options, steps, conditions, and choices.
- c. For more information on using plain writing, see these websites:

The Department of State plain writing site:

https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/plain-writing/SitePages/Plain-Writing-Home.aspx

The Plain Language Action and Information Network: www.plainlanguage.gov

National Archives plain writing tools: https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/write/plain-language

USCIS plain writing videos: https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/uscis-plain-language

Section 2.3: How To Indicate Whether the Reader Has Discretion To Deviate From the Instructions

Remember as you draft that you are giving instructions and guidance to the reader. The information must be clear, and the discretion of the reader to deviate from instructions must be clear. Use sentences with the auxiliary verbs "must," "should," and "may" to describe the level of discretion. Avoid using the verb "shall" since its various definitions tend to confuse rather than clarify your intent. Where appropriate, use "must" instead:

- (1) Mandatory: Use "must" to tell the reader that he or she has no discretion to deviate from the instructions. In some cases, the reader will have no discretion, but another person or entity can grant authority to deviate from the instruction. If so, identify the person (by title) or office (by name/symbol) with authority and the circumstances under which the authority may be exercised;
- (2) Recommended: Use "should" to advise the reader that the

instruction you are providing is the Department's preferred approach. However, the word "should" permits the reader to deviate if the reader can accomplish the objective in another way. Clearly specify how much discretion the reader has, and advise the reader if he or she must justify any deviations. Use the term "recommended" if you believe the word "should" will not convey these points adequately in the context of the sentence. Either define the word "should" or hyperlink to this definition at the beginning of subchapters in which the word appears; and

(3) Advisory: Use "may" to advise the reader that he or she has the option to pursue alternative courses of action. Use "may" when neither law, regulation, nor management policy dictates which of several options to follow.

Section 3: FAM Structure

Section 3.1: Format

- a. The FAM's format is designed to meet E-Government objectives. This format affords speed and flexibility in finding material and linking to supporting documentation.
- b. Write or revise FAM subchapters using the official Department FAM/FAH template. This template is available here: https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/fam/Pages/FAM%20Template%202013%20taxonomy%20signed.dotm. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 refer to organizing and formatting your FAM subchapters properly (including handbook sections).
- c. To revise a subchapter, you must download the most current Microsoft Word version from the DIR website. Turn on track changes and use it while writing new or revising existing content. Review the entire subchapter and revise all outdated content. In rare circumstances, A/GIS/DIR will publish specific changes to a section without requiring the drafter to review the entire subchapter. For guidance in these instances, contact the relevant DIR FAM volume analyst, from the FAM analyst list, or EFAM@state.gov.
- d. Once you have completed the clearance process, and before you send your final draft to A/GIS/DIR, go through the entire subchapter and follow these procedures:
 - (1) Ensure all track changes are shown; and
 - (2) Email the final draft to A/GIS/DIR (EFAM@state.gov).
- f. After clearance A/GIS/DIR will convert the revised or new text to italics

and dark magenta if the revisions are less than 50% of the subchapter. When revisions to a subchapter total 50 percent or more, we will not show the changes in dark magenta italics. (See section 5.2.)

Section 3.2: Volume Structure

- a. There are two officially approved numbering systems for organizing the FAM/FAH. Drafters must use one of these number systems:
 - (1) The first numbering system is divided into chapters, subchapters, and sections(e.g. 2 FAM):
 - (a) Chapters are numbered 000, 100, 200, etc.;
 - (b) Subchapters are numbered 010, 020, 110, 120, etc. The subchapter is the basic unit of publication. The first subchapter will include the chapter number and title at the top of the document;
 - (c) Sections are numbered 011, 012, 022, 111, 121, etc.;
 - (d) Sections may be furthered divided into subsections:
 - (i) The first level of subsection is numbered 011.1, 011.2, etc.;
 - (ii) These can be divided again into a second level as 011.1-1, 011.1-2, etc.
 - (iii) The third level subsection is number 011.1-1(A), 011.1-1(B), etc; and
 - (iv) The fourth level subsection is number 011.1-1(A)(1), 011.1-1(A)(2), etc.
 - (e) Please note that this numbering system limits the number of subchapters in a chapter and sections in a subchapter to 9;
 - (f) Example:

```
⊕ 060 INTERNATIONAL DISASTER AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ⊕ 070 DISSENT CHANNEL ⊕ 110 POST MANAGEMENT

□ 110 POST MANAGEMENT
□ 110 POST ORGANIZATION □ □ □ 111.1 GENERAL POLICIES
□ 111.1 GENERAL POLICIES
□ 111.1-1 OPENNESS IN POST OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT
□ 111.1-2 PROMOTING CORDIAL RELATIONS
□ 111.1-3 OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS
□ 111.1-4 RECOGNITION POLICY AND POST ACTIVITIES DURING PERIODS OF SEVERANCE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS OR THE RECALL OF THE U.S. MISSION
□ 111.1-5 COUNTRY CLEARANCE
□ 111.2 DEFINITIONS
□ 111.3 AUTHORITIES
⊕ 112 MISSION ORGANIZATION
```

- (g) Exhibits: This numbering system allows for Exhibits. Exhibits should be numbered to indicate the subchapter they are in and the section that first references them. For example, 1 FAM Exhibit 111 can be found in 1 FAM 110, first referenced in section 111. If you have multiple exhibits referenced in the same section, differentiate them with a capital letter: 1 FAM Exhibit 111(A) and 1 FAM Exhibit 111(B).
- (2) The second numbering system is divided into series, chapters, subchapters, and sections. This numbering system is currently in use in 8, 9, and 18 FAM. This second numbering system is used on all new volumes of the FAM and the FAH, with the goal to eventually move all volumes to this numbering system:
 - (a) Series are numbered 100, 200, 300, etc.
 - (b) Chapters are numbered 101, 102, 201, 202, etc.
 - (c) Subchapters are numbered 101.1, 102.2, 201.1, etc. The subchapter is the basic unit of publication. The first subchapter will include the series and chapter numbers and titles at the top of the document.
 - (d) Sections are numbered 101.1-1, 101.1-2, 102.2-1, etc.
 - (e) Sections may be furthered divided into subsections:
 - (i) The first level subsection is numbered 101.1-1(A), 101.1-1(B), etc. and
 - (ii) The second level subsection is numbered 101.1-1(A)(1), 101.1-1(A)(2), etc.
 - (f) This is the preferred numbering system because it does not limit the number of subchapters in a chapter or sections in a subchapter to 9.
 - (g) Example:

■ 100 INTRODUCTION TO 9 FAM VISAS ■ 101 OVERVIEW OF 9 FAM ■ 101.1 INTRODUCTION TO 9 FAM ■ 101.1-1 PURPOSE OF 9 FAM 101.1-2 9 FAM: RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES AND REGULATIONS 101.1-3 PLAIN LANGUAGE ■ 101.2 TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR 9 FAM USE ■ 101.2-1 RESOURCES FOR 9 FAM USE 101.2-2 OTHER 9 FAM SUPPORT ■ 102 VISAS OVERVIEW ■ 103 VISA OFFICE POINTS OF CONTACT ■ 200 (U) TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES WITH OTHER DOCUMENTS, NON-VISA TRAVELERS ■ 201 (U) EXEMPTIONS AND WAIVERS OF VISA AND/OR PASSPORT REQUIREMENTS

- (h) There are no exhibits in this numbering system.
- b. Foreign Affairs Handbook structure is the same as FAM structure, except that each chapter, subchapter, section, etc., receives an "H-" in front of each number.

Section 3.3: Paragraph Structure

a. If a section has more than one paragraph, identify each paragraph by a letter designation. If a section has only one paragraph, or one paragraph followed by two or more subordinate paragraphs (identified as subparagraphs), do not identify the single (main) paragraph with a letter. Do, however, identify subparagraphs by numbers or letters in parentheses, depending on their degree of subordination:

Example		
Descending order of paragraphs and subparagraphs		
Single paragraph level	Text	
a. lettered paragraph level	Text abc	
(1) first subparagraph level	Text 123	
(a) second subparagraph level	Text (a)	

NOTE: FAM section titles and paragraphing structure must follow the "two or more" rule; i.e., you can't have "a" without "b", or "(1)" without "(2)".

b. Notes to paragraphs are part of, and have the same style as, the paragraphs they follow. The word "NOTE" is in all caps bold type and is followed by a colon.

Example	
NOTE: Follow this handbook's instructions.	Text

- c. Exception to paragraph structure. In a Definitions section, each definition paragraph remains unlettered and unnumbered:
 - (1) List defined terms in alphabetical order;
 - (2) The term defined is in bold type followed by a colon and two spaces; and
 - (3) The definition is in "Text abc" paragraph style.

Examples

Approving official (AO): An individual who is officially established in the purchase card program through a written delegation memorandum and who has daily oversight responsibility for each cardholder under his or her purview.

Junior officer candidate: All Foreign Service officer candidates in the categories covered by 3 FAM 2241.3, subparagraphs (1) and (3).

Section 3.4: Change Transmittal (CT) Lines

- a. A/GIS/DIR issues changes to the FAM through a change transmittal (CT) issuance—formerly known as a transmittal letter (TL). The CT indicates when the last update was made and includes a summary of the changes. A/GIS/DIR maintains copies of all changes. If you need to know what text was in effect on a specified date, contact the Office of Directives Management (EFAM@state.gov).
- b. When the FAM volume coordinator (VC) or program office submits updates to A/GIS/DIR, it must include a summary of the changes to be included in the CT.
- c. Place the CT line (italics, centered, and in parentheses) below each subchapter title. (CT line is style CT Centered.)

NOTE: In addition to the CT line, each subchapter heading also must have an Office of Origin reference. (Use the CT Centered style for the Office of Origin line).

Example

SUBCHAPTER TITLE

(CT:GEN-969; 01-16-2004) CT Centered (Office of Origin: A/GIS/DIR) CT Centered

d. Place the CT line below any section or subsection title and specify its issuance date.

Example

0 FAH-1 H-113.1-3 Change Transmittal (CT) Lines

(CT:GEN-969; 01-16-2004)

CT Flush

e. Unless otherwise noted, FAM changes become effective on the issuance date of the change transmittal (CT). When the effective date of a FAM section differs from the CT date, specify the effective date on a line immediately below the section or subsection heading (italic, flush left, and in parentheses).

Example

O FAH-1 H-113.1-3 Change Transmittal (CT) Lines

(CT:GEN-969; 01-16-2004) CT Flush (Effective Date: 01-05-2004) CT Flush

- f. Informational CT lines convey information about the subchapter or section using metadata:
 - (1) Informational CT lines must be formatted as follows:
 - (a) Use the CT Line Flush format in the template;
 - (b) Enclose in parentheses;
 - (c) Contains title and body that are separated by a colon and a space;
 - (d) Title is one of the agreed upon from subparagraph f(3) below;
 - (e) Title must match the title given and not be pluralized;
 - (f) Body must contain item or list of items under the title; and
 - (g) If more than one item is listed in the body then each item must be separated by a semicolon.
 - (2) The complete list of titles that can be used is listed in subparagraph f(3) below. Others must not be used unless they meet the following criteria:
 - (a) Used in more than one volume or broadly throughout a volume;
 - (b) Length of title is short;
 - (c) Does not duplicate one already in existence; and
 - (d) Will need a clear comprehensive definition that covers what may be included.
 - (3) In use today:
 - Agency the agency or office under the President to which the section applies. The full name of the agency should be spelled out; e.g., Department of Homeland Security rather than DHS or Homeland Security.
 - Employee Type type of government employee to whom the section applies; inclusive list below:
 - Foreign Service
 - o Civil Service
 - Locally Employed Staff
 - Contractor
 - (4) New titles can be added to the list above but will require a definition.

Section 3.5: Headers and Footers

Section 3.5-1: Page Headers

Each FAM and FAH subchapter has a page header, automatically inserted by selecting the appropriate volume number in the FAM template. The header contains the following:

- (1) Document classification;
- (2) U.S. Department of State;
- (3) Foreign Affairs Manual or Foreign Affairs Handbook;
- (4) Volume number (FAM) or volume number and handbook number (FAH); and
- (5) Title of volume (FAM) or handbook (FAH).

Example of FAM Header

UNCLASSIFIED (U)

U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 9 Visas

Example of FAH Header

UNCLASSIFIED (U)

U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 12 Handbook 2— Protection Handbook

NOTE: Text style for page headers is 10-pt Verdana centered.

Section 3.5-2: Page Footers

Each FAM and FAH subchapter has a page footer, automatically inserted by the FAM template. The footer contains the following:

- (1) Document classification;
- (2) The FAM or FAH volume number;
- (3) Handbook number (for FAHs only);
- (4) Subchapter number; and
- (5) Page number.

Example of Footer

Error! No text of specified style in document. Page 37 of 63

UNCLASSIFIED (U)

NOTE: Text style for the page footer is 10-pt Verdana flush right.

Section 3.5-3: Classification Level Indicators

- a. For the placement of the overall document classification level, the FAM follows the guidelines set forth by Executive Order 13526 and ISOO Implementing Directive No. 1, and illustrated by ISOO's "Marking Classified National Security Information." Specifically, the overall classification [for Secret and Confidential FAMs and FAHs] must conspicuously appear at the top and bottom of each page, as illustrated on page 5 of ISOO's booklet. Classifications should appear in Boldface All Caps 12 text, centered top and bottom on each page. No other document text should appear above the top, or below the bottom, of the classification indicators.
- b. Example of Classification Header and Footer

CONFIDENTIAL

U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 2—General (U)

- (U) Main text appears here; main text appears here; main text appears here; main text appears here; main text appears here.
- (C) Main text for classified text; main text for classified text; main text for classified text; main text for classified text 2 FAM 110 Page 1 of 64

CONFIDENTIAL

- c. Documents classified as Secret (S), Confidential (C), and Top Secret (TS) must have current and valid original or derivative classification markings:
 - (1) Original Classification must appear at the top of the first page and include the following information:
 - Classified By: name, title, and office or bureau of the person who made the original classification
 - Reason: reason code from E.O. 13526 for why the material is classified at that level
 - Declassify On: either a date in the format (YYYYMMDD) or the declassification code
 - (2) Derivative classification must appear on the top of the first page and include the following information:
 - Derived From: document that the classified material was derived from

Classifier: name, title, office

Reason: reason code for why the material is classified at that level

Declassify On: either a date in the format (YYYYMMDD) or the

declassification code

- d. **Portion marking:** Each portion of a classified or sensitive but unclassified (SBU) subchapter must be marked to indicate the classification or sensitivity level of that portion. Portions include titles, paragraphs, headings, etc. The portion should be marked based on the words in that portion alone. Do not label headings or titles based on the classification of the text that comes below, but based on the words in the heading/title alone.
- e. These rules apply to Change Transmittals (CTs) as well as FAM/FAH subchapters.
- f. For questions related to classifying or marking classified FAM or FAH subchapters contact classification@state.gov.

Section 4: Technical Aspects of Drafting

The Department generally follows the standards published in the U.S. Government Printing Office's Style Manual (the GPO Style Manual). For exceptions to the GPO Style Manual rules, see the Executive Secretariat's Office of Correspondence and Records "Ready Reference Guide."

NOTE: As an aid to the reader, references to the specific sections of the GPO Style Manual have been added to several rules of grammar, capitalization, punctuation, etc.

Section 4.1: Abbreviations

In general, refer to the GPO Style Manual (Chapter 9) for accepted forms of abbreviations, acronyms, and letter symbols:

(1) State Department Offices: Spell out the full title the first time you use it and place its office symbol acronym in parentheses directly after it. Reintroduce the full title of the acronym the first time you use it in each section, or more often if needed for clarity:

Example

Assistant Director for International Programs (DS/IP) regional security office (RSO)

(2) U.S. and United States: Use "U.S." only as an adjective, and spell out "United States" when used as a noun:

Example

The United States announced the closing of a consular office.

- (3) Department of State: Do not use "DOS" for the Department of State. Use "State" or "the Department";
- (4) Public Law: Spell out both words; do not abbreviate;
- (5) U.S.C: Abbreviate the U.S. Code using periods; and
- (6) CFR, FAM, FAH, and U.S. Government Departments and Agencies Other Than the Department of State: Abbreviate without periods (e.g., DOD).

Section 4.2: Capitalization

In general, follow the examples below for capitalizing names and titles:

Rule	Example
Capitalize formal titles and organized bodies or entities. The GPO Style Manual 3.17	Ambassador Smith briefed the Marine security guards in the Embassy courtyard.
Do not capitalize generic or functional titles. The GPO Style Manual 3.34	regional security officer; ambassador; consular officer
Capitalize names of regions, localities, and geographic features. The GPO Style Manual 3.21	the Far East; the North Pole; Middle Eastern; the Western Hemisphere; the Midwest
Capitalize Internet, Intranet, and the Web, but lower case the word "site." The GPO Style Manual 4	The Department has an Internet Web site as well as an in-house Intranet site.
Capitalize the proper or full names of organizations, bureaus, or offices. The GPO Style Manual 3.17	The front offices for the Bureau of Administration and the Office of UN Political Affairs are on the sixth floor.
Capitalize official designations of countries, national domains, and their principal administrative divisions. The GPO Style Manual 3.19	United States, the Republic, the Nation, the Union, the Government, the Federal Government, the State of Maryland, and the State (referring to one of the 50 U.S. States).

Section 4.3: Citing FAM-Related Materials

- a. Where a section references material outside the FAM, identify that material so that DIR can provide a hyperlink to it. (See section 4.4.)
- b. How you cite a FAM/FAH reference depends on the document:
 - (1) Volumes use volume number and acronym, plus section or subsection:

Examples1 FAM 123 6 FAM 469.3-2

(2) Handbooks use volume number, handbook acronym and number (separated by a hyphen), then the section or subsection number (preceded by an "H-"):

Example 5 FAH-1 H-456

(3) Exhibits and appendices use the volume or handbook style from above, "Exhibit" or "Appendix," with the section or subsection number followed by a comma, then the document title:

Examples4 FAM Exhibit 225.2 4 FAH-3 Exhibit H-525

- c. Do not start a sentence with a numerical reference. Precede the reference with at least one word or article. For example: "See 2 FAM 1111.3 for the scope of..." or "Consult 22 CFR "
- d. You may let the formatting split a reference by having one part begin near the end of the line and continuing on the next line.

Section 4.4: Hyperlinks

- a. A hyperlink is an electronic link providing direct access from one electronic document to another. Clicking on a keyword or key phrase in one source (e.g., the FAM) opens another electronic source. The location of these electronic sources is called a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) (i.e., a Web address).
- b. Hyperlinks do not exist in all published versions of the FAM and FAH:
 - (1) The links exist and work only in the OpenNet html version (ClassNet has FAM links only);
 - (2) The public, Internet site has FAM links only; and
 - (3) The links do not exist in the Word document version (on the

OpenNet) that some drafters use to revise the FAM and FAH.

- c. Just before publishing on the OpenNet, A/GIS/DIR uses a computer program that does two things:
 - (1) It "cleans" the document by removing links, redundant versions, bookmarks, comments, etc. (which reduces document size), and turns off the track changes feature in the document; and
 - (2) It then adds links to the associated keyword or key phrase within the document. It adds links throughout the HTML version by simply adding the URL portion to the associated keyword or keyphrase, leaving the visible text unchanged. This saves time for everyone involved in the revision process.
- d. A/GIS/DIR then adds custom links where the drafter supplied URLs.
- e. The following sections tell you how to prepare your citations for the system to link your text to the reference.

Section 4.4-1: Automatic Links

DIR's publishing system automatically links to the following regulations. The system will add these links if and only if you format the citation as shown in this section.

Example: CFR—Code of Federal Regulations

Correct: 22 CFR 40.9

Incorrect:

- (1) 22 CFR 40: The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) site, the source for the CFR, will not link to this level. The GPO site only recognizes citations at the subsection level. This is GPO's limitation, not the Department's; and
- (2) Code of Federal Regulations Title 5, Chapter I, Part 723, Section 130—The program does not recognize the long-hand version citation. Written as 5 CFR 723.130, this citation will result in a link.

Example: U.S.C.—United States Code

Correct:

- (1) 22 U.S.C. 2651a(a)(3)(A)
- (2) 5 U.S.C. 302

Incorrect:

Title 5 U.S.C., Part I, Chapter 3, Section 302(b)(1): the program does not recognize the long hand version citation. The same citation written as 5 U.S.C. 302(b)(1) will result in a link.

Example: OMB Circular

Correct: OMB Circular A-130

Incorrect:

- (1) Circular 130
- (2) OMB A-130
- (3) Office of Management and Budget Circular 130

Example: Executive Orders

Correct:

(1) E.O. 13759

(2) Executive Order 13759

Incorrect: EO 13759

Example: Federal Acquisitions Regulation (FAR)

Correct: FAR 1.101

Incorrect: Federal Acquisitions Regulation 1.101

Example: FAM and FAH Links

The program will automatically create FAM and FAH links when the citation is in the correct format. The citation can be for any section level and must match the section number as it appears in the volume. When citing a paragraph within a section, leave a space between the FAM citation and the paragraph number or letter or insert the word

'paragraph' between the citation and the paragraph number.

- a. Correct:
 - (1) 4 FAM 620;
 - (2) 6 FAM 923.4-6;
 - (3) 7 FAM 842 paragraph b; and
 - (4) 3 FAH-1 H-426 g(2).
- b. Incorrect:
 - (1) Volume 5 subchapter 620 of the FAM; and
 - (2) 5 FAH-3 H-421f

Section 4.4-2: INA—Immigration and Nationality Act

- a. A/GIS/DIR does not link directly to the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 (INA) because there is no complete, current version of the Act on the Web that reflects all its amendments and edits.
- b. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 is incorporated into the U.S. Code (U.S.C.), which is available online. To cite a section of the Act, follow these examples (important if the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) changes its system and DIR can create direct links).

Example: INA—Immigration and Naturalization Act

- a. Correct:
 - (1) INA 212(a)(1)(B)
 - (2) INA 101(b)
 - (3) INA 201
- b. Incorrect:
 - (1) INA201: Needs a space between "INA" and the section number;
 - (2) INA 101 (b): Space after the section number "101" ends the citation; this link will go to INA 101 and not directly to the paragraph (b) under it. This will require users to scroll to find the cited paragraph; and
 - (3) INA title II chapter 3 section 223: The program does not recognize the long-hand version citation. This same citation written as INA 223 will produce a link.

Section 4.4-3: Foreign Service Act of 1980

a. A/GIS/DIR does not link directly to the Foreign Service Act of 1980

- because there is no version of the Act on the Web that reflects all its amendments and edits. So we found another way to provide the most current version of the Act's information.
- b. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 is incorporated into the U.S. Code, which is available online. To cite a section of the Act, place the U.S. Code equivalent in parenthesis immediately after the citation. The FAM/FAH publishing program will automatically make the U.S.C. links as outlined in 2 FAH-1 H-114.4-1. For example: under the authority of Sections 309 and 311(a) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended (22 U.S.C. 3949, 22 U.S.C. 3951(a)).
- c. A/GIS/DIR has a chart with the sections of the Foreign Service Act and its U.S. Code equivalents on its OpenNet site at https://usdos.sharepoint.com/sites/A-GIS/dir/Pages/FSAConversion.aspx

Section 4.4-4: Custom Links

- a. The FAM can link to other websites, such as other U.S. Government agencies and organizations. You need to provide a key word or phrase and the URL for the link. Make sure the key word or phrase:
 - Refers to the actual page—Use the actual page or site title to refer to a page. Do not cite the home page if you are referring to a specific page on a site and vice versa. The key phrase should match the actual page linked;
 - (2) Is unique: Use a unique phrase. Choosing a common word or phrase could result in the link appearing in many places throughout the volume and accompanying handbooks; and
 - (3) Is consistent: Use same phrase every time you want the reader to go to that particular source. (It may help to check the page itself for a good key phrase to use.) Do not use multiple phrases to link to the same URL. This could cause confusion when several different citations link to the same page.

Examples of Custom Links:

a. **Correct:** Phrase: American Red Cross Guide for Families Affected by Transportation Disasters

URL: http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/transportation.html

The phrase cites a specific item on a site and the URL links directly;

b. Incorrect:

(1) Phrase: American Red Cross URL:

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/transportation.html

Broad phrase, specific item link—users would expect to go to the home page of the Red Cross and not to any specific page or item within the site; and

(2) Phrase: Guide for Families Affected by Transportation Disasters URL: http://www.redcross.org/
Specific phrase, general link—users would expect to go to the specific page or item of the guide itself, not the Red Cross home page.

Section 4.4-5: No Hyperlinks

A/GIS/DIR does not link to the following, for a variety of reasons:

- (1) Federal Register; and
- (2) Public Laws: There is no complete, current version of them available on the Web that reflects all their amendments and edits.

Section 4.5: Using Numbers

Follow these guidelines when citing numbers and numerical form. See the GPO Style Manual 12.1 to 12.29.

Rule	Example	
Spell out numbers below 10 in a	The program places emphasis on	
sentence.	three vital areas.	
Use figures for numbers 10 and	A committee of 15 RSOs rewrote	
above.	21 subchapters.	
For two or more numbers in a	The embassy constructed 14	
sentence, if one is above 10, then	staff houses and 6 guard towers.	
use figures for each number.		
Spell out ordinal numbers first	The first meeting convenes on	
through ninth for time or location.	the third floor in the second	
	week of June.	
Use figures for units of	In the first 8 hours, over 40	
measurement, time, or money.	percent of the officers donated	
	at least \$75 each.	
Use figures for monetary amounts	The court distributed the	
less than 1 million.	remaining \$250,000 to 100	
	stockholders.	
Spell out numbers at the beginning	Twelve years passed before he	
of a sentence.	returned to the bureau.	
When possible, recast the sentence	He returned to the bureau 12	
in active voice.	years later.	

Rule	Example	
Use figures to express mixed	The report was 9-1/2 pages	
fractions, but spell out fractions	long, but the synopsis was only	
standing alone.	one-tenth of that.	
For percentages, use a figure and	There is a 30-percent chance of	
spell out the word "percent."	rain tomorrow.	
With two separate figures, use	There is a 20- to 25-percent	
"percent" only once.	chance of rain today.	
Use the words "million," "billion,"	150 million people, \$12.5 billion,	
and "trillion" for large numbers.	6.5 trillion stars	
Use numerals rather than letters for	The graph in Figure 2 displays	
figures or illustrations.	the rate of increased	
	compensation.	
Use numerals to explain sequential	1. Type in the Web address.	
steps, especially when giving	This will bring you to our home	
instructions.	page.	
	2. Mouse click on "Contact	
	Us."	
	3. Type in your message.	

Section 4.5-1: Time of Day

Follow these guidelines when citing time of day. See the GPO Style Manual, 12.9b.

Concept	Example
Use a.m. and p.m. with a 12-hour Send us your report by 10:3	
clock cycle.	a.m. Monday.
Omit minutes when citing time on	Send us your report by 10 a.m.
the hour.	Monday.
Always write "noon" and	The passport office must receive
"midnight" (and not "12 p.m." or	the application by noon
"12 a.m.").	tomorrow.

Section 4.5-2: Dates

a. Write out specific dates within sentences or as part of a heading. See the GPO Style Manual, 12.9c.

Concept	Example	
Date within a	We received advanced notice of the inquiry on	
sentence	June 15, 2003.	
Date in a heading	January 15, 2003	
	The Director of Operations	
	U.S. Department of State	
	Washington, D.C. 20520	

b. Use figures when referring to specific dates. See the GPO Style Manual

12. 9c.

Examples

the 4th of April (specific month)

but, the fourth day of the month (nonspecific month)

Section 4.6: Punctuation

- a. Apostrophe: See the GPO Style Manual 8.3 to 8.18. Use an apostrophe to show possession:
 - (1) Place an "s" at the end of a singular word, or at the end of a plural word that does not end in "s.":

Example

The Court's decision on the women's claim is under review.

(2) Place the apostrophe only at the end of plural words ending in "s":

Example

We updated our analysts' research strategies this quarter.

(3) With a possessive involving two subjects, determine whether both parties own the item together or separately:

Example

State and AID's policy regarding

NOTE: In the above case, State and AID share the same policy. In the next example, we have two different administrations.

Example

Carter's and Reagan's administrations were . . .

Exception: Don't place an apostrophe after names of countries or organized bodies ending in "s."

Example

A United Nations meeting; the United States policy

b. Bullets: Use bullets to highlight key thoughts or for a short list of items. Bulleted items should not be complete sentences.

Example

Any proposed new organizational structure should strive to achieve a proper balance among:

Mission needs

Efficiency of operations

Effective employee utilization

- c. Colon: See the GPO Style Manual 8.23 to 8.33.
- d. Comma: See the GPO Style Manual 8.34 to 8.49. Use a comma:

(1) To join two complete sentences with "and," "or," "but," "yet," and so on:

Example

State enacted needed improvements, and these actions benefit all U.S. Government agencies at posts abroad.

(2) After introductory words and phrases:

Examples

By July 1998, the new program was ready for review. Furthermore, policy alone cannot revoke this decision.

(3) Between two or more consecutive adjectives instead of the conjunction "and":

Example

The program is a simple, cost-effective method of purchasing.

(4) Before the word "and" or other conjunctions in lists of three or more words, letters, phrases, or figures:

Example

We have more control, lower turnover, and better relations.

(5) With nonessential or secondary information:

Example

They studied the best data-gathering practices, sending questionnaires across the world, and presented the findings and recommendations to management.

(6) In dates, between the day and the year:

Example

You must submit the complete report by May 22, 2004.

NOTE: Do not use a comma when the day is missing, or when referring to a specific year (See the GPO Style Manual 8.52).

Examples

The new program began in May 2004.

This policy will expire in the Year 2004.

- e. Em dash: See the GPO Style Manual 8.60 to 8.68. Use an em dash to give a longer pause than a comma, although two hyphens are also acceptable. Also use the em dash:
 - (1) To interrupt a thought:

Example

We agreed that we could provide a more pleasing environment than a separate building—away from headquarters. (2) To emphasize a point, or to separate your emphasis from the main part of the sentence:

Example

Employee satisfactions rates rose to 85 percent—meeting our internal goal—with the survey return rate reaching 55 percent.

(3) To summarize a series of items at the end of your sentence:

Example

A second attempt would require additional office space—fully supplied with costly furniture and equipment.

- f. Hyphen: See the GPO Style Manual 8.86 to 8.90:
 - (1) Use a hyphen:
 - (a) With a prefix, if the first letter of the base word is capitalized:

Examples

pro-Marxist, anti-American

(b) With compound modifiers:

Examples

We had a face-to-face meeting. Our reviewer is a part-time contractor.

- (2) Do not hyphenate:
 - (a) Compound modifiers using "very" and adverbs ending in "ly":

Examples

The Department participated in very long meetings. A quickly forgotten decision is no decision at all.

(b) Compound predicate adjectives:

Example

Our reviewer works full time.

g. Semicolon: See the GPO Style Manual 8.145 to 8.147.

Section 5: Publication Standards

Section 5.1: FAM Template

- a. The FAM/FAH template is, generally, already embedded in MS Wordversion subchapters that you retrieve from the DIR website.
- b. To update an existing subchapter:
 - (1) Access the subchapter that needs updating from the A/GIS/DIR

- website and save a copy to your desktop;
- (2) Make any additions, deletions, or changes to the entire subchapter text; or
- (3) Contact your FAM analyst for formatting and template help.
- c. A/GIS/DIR is responsible for formatting and ensuring the template is installed in each subchapter.

Section 5.2: Fonts and Typefaces

- a. The official versions of the FAM and FAHs use electronic-based fonts for their publishing standards.
- b. The FAM uses Verdana for both heads and text. Body text and CT lines are 12 points; table text can be 10 or 12 points; and heads vary from 14 to 22 points within chapters. (The FAM/FAH Templates include preformatted styles for both heads and text and are available as toolbar buttons and from the application's Style dropdown menu.)
 - **NOTE:** You may use footnotes in FAM documents. Use 10 point for footnotes.
- c. As a visual aid to readers, place two letter spaces between sentences in normal text.
- d. **Bold:** Use bold for emphasis.
- e. **Italic:** Do not use italics for emphasis, titles of publications, or foreign words. (See the GPO Style Manual for additional guidance on the use of italics.)
- f. Text styles are flush left, single-spaced, with 6 points of space before and after each paragraph. The text styles most frequently used are:
 - (1) **FAM Body Text (Text):** The paragraph style following a section or subsection heading; used when only one main paragraph is needed;
 - (2) **FAM Body Text abc (Text abc):** The basic style for the initial lettered paragraph level; used for multi-paragraph text following a section or subsection heading; and
 - (3) **FAM Body Text 123 (Text 123):** A numbered first subparagraph level style; used as a subset of the FAM Body Text or FAM Body abc paragraphs.
- g. Chapter and subchapter headings are centered. Section and subsection headings are flush left. All headings have two letter spaces between the number and title.
- h. Underline: Do not underline text in a FAM or FAH document.

Section 5.3: Reserved Formats

- a. The FAM structure uses color to enhance the user's reading and retention of information and to help the reader visualize information. When printing in black and white, the color text prints as black or dark gray.
- b. A/GIS/DIR uses a combination of specific fonts, sizes, styles, and colors as a signal to identify specific FAM information. The Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards, which implement Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794d), prohibit using color alone to identify information (see 36 CFR 1194.21(i)).
- c. RGB refers to a color model in which red (R), green (G), and blue (B) values are used to reproduce a set of standard colors.
- d. Reserved FAM colors:
 - (1) Heads are dark blue™ (R0,G0,B139). This contrasts with standard text, which is black. (Heads are in bold and vary from 14 points to 22 points. Use template buttons H14 to H22 to set style and color.) The FAM heading styles should only be used for FAM headings.
 - (2) New or revised material is dark magenta[™] (R139,G0,B139) and in italic. For example: published changes are shown in both dark magenta[™] and italic.

NOTE: This does not apply to new or revised heads. They remain dark blue[™], bold, and no italic.

- (3) Change transmittal (CT) lines are saddle brown™ (R139,G69,B19) and in italic. (Use template buttons CT Centered and CT Flush to set style and color.)
- (4) The color fire brick™ (R178,G34,B34) is used for emphasis beyond bolding or for contrast in figures or charts. (Use the template button Emphasis to set style and color.)

NOTE: The four colors chosen here were taken from the Browser Safe Web Pallet to meet 508 requirements and do not precisely match the standard Windows Pallet™.

Section 6: Moving Existing Material

a. When moving material from one subchapter to another, the volume coordinators must inform A/GIS/DIR to insure that the material from the previous subchapter is removed at the same time the new material is published. Examples of when material may move:

- (1) The subject matter now relates more closely to subject matter in another volume;
- (2) The subject matter has expanded in both content and scope to such an extent that it is sufficient to establish a new volume or subchapter; or
- (3) The subject-matter content has changed due to new and/or evolving technologies.
- b. There are several ways to revise material during a move:
 - (1) Move the material, as is, from one subchapter to another without making any substantive changes. If you make the move this way, no clearances are required;
 - (2) Update the material prior to or in the process of moving it. This requires normal department clearances prior to the move; or
 - (3) In instances where an entire subchapter is not moved, the subchapter with the remaining material must be updated and published in conjunction with the subchapter with the moved material.
- c. When moving existing material from one volume to another, both volume coordinators must coordinate and develop a crosswalk. A crosswalk lists the location of the material before and after a move. For research purposes, crosswalks track when content has moved from one section to another, whether within a subchapter, from subchapter to subchapter, or from one volume to another. They are required in all similar instances. DIR will publish the crosswalk in the Change Transmittal.

Example of Movement Between Volumes

FAM Crosswalks			
This move took place on 01/01/2015 in conjunction with CT:XXX-xxx and			
CT:XXX-xxx.			
Volume From	Volume To		
6 FAM 610	14 FAM 230		
6 FAM 620	14 FAM 340		
6 FAM 630	14 FAM 510		

Example of Movement within the Same Volume:

Old Location	Old Title	New Location	New Title
9 FAM 302.3-3	(U) Multiple Criminal Convictions -	9 FAM 302.3-4	(U) Multiple Criminal

	INA 212(a)(2)(B)		Convictions - INA 212(a)(2)(B)
9 FAM 302.3-3(A)	(U) Grounds	9 FAM 302.3-4(A)	(U) Grounds
9 FAM 302.3-3(B)	(U) Application	9 FAM 302.3-4(B)	(U) Application

2023 Annual Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) Review 4/17/2023

The Office of Directives Management (A/GIS/DIR) is preparing for the Department's 2023 Annual Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) Review, which will take place **from May 1 through May 31, 2023**. The FAM and FAHs are a single, comprehensive, and authoritative source for the Department's organization structures, policies, and procedures that govern the operations of the State Department, the Foreign Service and, when applicable, other federal agencies.

Program offices are required to perform an annual review of their policies and procedures documented in the FAM/FAH per 18 FAM 201.1-1(B). Additional guidance is forthcoming through Executive Offices and FAM Volume Coordinators.

Program offices that are responsible for FAM volumes (i.e. 1 FAM, 2 FAM, etc.) and chapters (i.e., 100, 200, 300, etc.) will be asked to review their assigned FAM/FAH subchapters to confirm ownership, and to ensure all information is current and accurate.

Starting this year, A/GIS/DIR is encouraging the removal of unnecessary gender specific language from the FAM. An example of this type of language would be the use of the term "his/her" in FAM content. All policy content should be reviewed to identify gender specific language. If gender specific language exists, the office of origin should coordinate with A/GIS/DIR to have it reviewed.

Also new this year, policy content should be reviewed to ensure all classification (i.e., confidential, secret) and sensitivity (i.e., SBU) markings are correct.

For subchapters requiring edits, program offices must provide a date by which each subchapter will be revised and submitted for Department clearance. Program offices are encouraged to start reviewing their FAM volumes and FAH chapters now.

As a reminder, FAM/FAH content should be drafted using plain writing principles, with language that is clear, concise, organized, and appropriate for the intended

audience. Guidance on plain writing is available on **state.gov** and **plainlanguage.gov**.

Additionally, to promote awareness and understanding of the FAM, A/GIS/DIR has developed the following short instructional video titled, <u>"What is the FAM?"</u>.

Please email **Efam@state.gov** with any questions about the 2023 FAM Review.

One Page Quick Reference Guide

PLAIN WRITING PRINCIPLES FOR DEPARTMENT OF STATE EMPLOYEES



1. Know your audience

- Think about who will read your product and why they will read it.
- Write to answer their questions in an easily understandable manner.

2. Use active voice

- Eliminate unnecessary use of the verb "to be."
- For example: "The visa must be approved by the Consular Officer" becomes "The Consular Officer must approve the visa."

3. Use "must" to indicate requirements

- "Shall" could mean either an obligation or a prediction. "Must" clearly conveys what someone has to do.
- For example: "Rejected applicants shall file an appeal within six months" becomes "Rejected applicants must file an appeal within six months."

4. Use pronouns to speak to readers

• For example: "Plain writing principles must be used" becomes "You must use plain writing principles."

5. Use shorter, simpler construction

- Shorter sentences are easier to digest.
- Keep paragraphs to three to eight sentences with only one idea per paragraph.
- Use bullets, lists, and tables whenever you can.

Writing Courses at FSI

Overview:

Office Management and Communication Training (OMCT) division offers training to office management specialists, civil service employees, and foreign service employees in a wide range of topics: protocol, cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, negotiating, writing skills, verbal communication skills, editing and feedback, project management skills, and other office management knowledge.

Courses:

PK425: Department of State Writing for Locally Employed Staff

- Distance learning (self-paced)
- Course Description:
 - This course offers Locally Employed Staff an opportunity to learn the fine points of writing for the Department of State. Students will practice planning, drafting, revising, and editing skills and review English grammar and usage rules. The course includes multiple self-paced modules. This course will help LE Staff who draft correspondence, cables, or reports to become more proficient writers.

This course is not for beginners in writing. Intermediate proficiency in writing is required.

- Course Objectives:
 - o Tailor documents for DOS audience and purpose.
 - o Write coherent, organized, well-developed paragraphs.
 - o Arrange information in logical sequence.
 - o Edit for clarity, simplicity, conciseness.
 - o Practice State Department writing.
 - o Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

RS521: Cable and Memo Writing

- 2 days long
- Course Description:
 - This course helps participants identify the functions of cables and memoranda within Department of State. Based on real-world scenarios, participants draft cables and memos designed to highlight important policy and strategic issues for a Washington audience. The participants will practice note-taking skills, use the TAGS and Terms Handbook, and create cables with classification and sensitivity markings. They will also have opportunities to review their work with an instructor on an individual basis.
- Course Objectives:
 - o Identify the purpose and function of cables, memoranda, and other documents.
 - Review the Department reporting framework to determine the Washington audience.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of cables using a rubric.
 - Write cables and memoranda within short deadlines that follow the Department format.
 - Apply proper note-taking strategies to capture the content of meeting, briefings, and public events to write cables and memoranda.
 - Use the TAGS/Terms Handbook to create cables with proper markings.

PK325: Writing Skills I - Grammar Fundamentals

- 5 days long
- Course Description:
 - The Grammar Fundamentals course provides practical applications that help students use accurate, clear, and concise writing techniques. It includes a review of writing mechanics: grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and number expression.
- Course Objectives:
 - Identify the parts of speech, phrases and clauses, dependent and independent sentences, and conjunctions.
 - Use correct pronoun references in writing.
 - o Demonstrate proper subject-verb agreement.
 - o Demonstrate correct and consistent tense usage.
 - Showcase correct usage of the possessive and articles.
 - o Use proper punctuation and capitalization.
 - o Express numbers correctly in writing.
 - Construct sentences using proper conjunctions and punctuations.
 - o Demonstrate parallelism in writing and lists.
 - Utilize proofreading strategies in the writing process.

PK326: Writing Skills II - Intermediate Business Writing

- 5 days long
- Course Description:
 - The Intermediate Business Writing course builds participants' ability to produce effective writing products tailored to their roles and responsibilities. The course focuses on clear, coherent, and concise writing that participants can use to develop cables, memos, and e-mails. Students will produce collaborative and independent products throughout the week and effectively apply editing and proofreading techniques.
- Course Objectives:
 - o Identify elements of strong writing and create a plan to incorporate them into writing products.
 - Write using clear, concise, grammatically correct language for prescribed audiences.
 - o Follow appropriate models and templates to produce writing products.
 - o Practice summarizing and "bottom line up front" format.
 - Use appropriate voice and tone for assigned writing products and audiences.
 - Proofread and edit own work and that of a colleague.

PK327: Writing Skills III - Advanced Business Writing

- 2 days long
- Course Description:
 - o In Advanced Business Writing, participants will build on their foundational writing skills to craft audience-centered deliverables. Participants will learn how to integrate messaging, style, and organization to write more purposefully and effectively and navigate challenging communication situations. The course focuses on strategies for delivering difficult messages, crafting meeting agendas, presenting multimedia content, and summarizing professional accomplishments. Through extensive practice, peer exchange, and individual consultation with instructors, participants will develop a versatile and practical skillset for higher-level writing.

Course Objectives:

- Develop and apply strategies for tailoring written communications to the needs and interests of various audiences.
- Increase familiarity with higher-level stylistic conventions of State Department writing.
- Learn best practices for communicating routine, persuasive, and difficult messages in the workplace.
- Apply key elements of effective business writing to construct results-oriented meeting agendas.
- Enhance PowerPoint presentations using basic design and organizational principles.
- Use the STAR method to write compelling accomplishment statements for EERs and/or resumes.

PK500: Better Feedback for Better Writing: A How-to Course for Supervisors and Leaders

- 5 days long
- Course Description:
 - In this course, participants will build skills and strategies that foster robust office cultures for exchanging writing feedback. By developing and applying a deeper understanding of the feedback process, participants will explore methods for creating safe spaces for open communication about writing and approaches to enhancing organizational writing abilities. Participants will learn how to identify writing errors, craft and deliver actionable feedback, communicate their expectations, and empower team members to write more confidently and effectively.

• Course Objectives:

- Use constructive feedback to explain edits that enhance the quality of written deliverables.
- o Evaluate drafters' writing by diagnosing errors in written deliverables.
- Recognize your responsibility as leaders and editors to improve writing performance by establishing writing expectations and feedback processes.

OMCT supports other Department and interagency courses through on-demand training.

Distance Writing Courses Available from FSI

FSI Distance Learning Writing Skills Courses

Course Title	Course Code	Topics Covered	Recommended For:
Department of State Writing for Locally Employed Staff	PK425	 Drafting correspondence, cables, or reports. Learn the fine points of writing for the Department of State. Practice planning, drafting, revising, and editing skills. Review English grammar and usage rules. 	Direct-hire (LE Staff) employees whose job requirements include writing correspondence, cables, or reports. Other Department employees with writing responsibilities may enroll.
Clarity and Conciseness in Business Writing	Percipio	 Explore techniques to make writing clearer. Using short and familiar words, appropriate connotations, concrete and specific language, and transitional words and phrases. Tips for being more concise and best practices for organizing content. 	Individuals at any level who want to refresh or refine their basic business writing skills.
Audience and Purpose in Business Writing	Percipio	 How to identify readers. Creating messages that convey the appropriate tone for different reader roles. How to write effectively for three common purposes: Inform, respond, persuade. 	Individuals at any level who want to refresh or refine their basic business writing skills.
Improving Your Technical Writing Skills	Percipio	 Identifying common writer errors. Sequencing the steps in planning to write. Recognizing guidelines for writing instructions, training manuals, reference materials, and for writing persuasively. 	Technical professionals wishing to improve their writing skills, including IT personnel such as programmers and systems engineers as well as technical engineering and scientific professionals.
Editing and Proofreading Business Documents	<u>Percipio</u>	 How to edit and proofread effectively. Reviewing for tone, structure, clarity, and accuracy. Checking for common grammar, punctuation, and spelling mistakes. 	Individuals at any level who want to refresh or refine their basic business writing skills.
Troublesome Words and Phrases: Common Usage Mistakes in Writing	Percipio	 How to use commonly confused words correctly, including word pairs that sound alike and those that have related meanings. Examine frequently misused verbs – for example, affect/effect or apprise/appraise. Review confusing idiomatic combinations of verbs and prepositions. 	Anyone who wants to refresh or refine basic business grammar skills for any purpose, from emails and memos to reports and presentations.

FSI Distance Learning Writing Skills Courses

Writing and Preparing Effective Speech The Plain Writing Act	comes from LMS	 How to write a speech. Setting the aim of a speech. Considering your audience and theme. Best practices for planning and research a speech. How to check a written speech for correctness. Principles of effective composition. Analyzing your audience. Organizing the presentation of information. Choosing clear words and phrases. 	Individuals at any level who wish to refresh and refine public speaking skills. Anyone who wants to refresh or refine basic business grammar skills for any purpose, from emails and memos to reports and
Taking Effective and Professional Notes	Percipio	 Tools, techniques, and grammar strategies for effective notetaking in interviews and meetings. Ways to write notes for learning and recall of information. 	presentations. Individuals at any level who want to refresh or refine their basic notetaking and communication skills.
Using Punctuation Marks	Percipio	 Standard rules and guidelines for using punctuation marks. Correct use of periods, question marks, and exclamation points. How to correctly use commas. How to use connecting and separating marks, such as colons, semicolons, dashes, and hyphens. How to use apostrophes, parentheses, brackets, and quotation marks. 	Anyone who wants to refresh or refine basic business grammar skills for any kind of business writing, from email and memos, to reports and presentations.
Writing Skills for Public Relations	Percipio	 Identifying the characteristics of a compelling key message. Recognizing how to write a press release that gets the attention of an intended audience. Recognizing best practices for distributing a press release. Identifying key characteristics of quality social media releases. Recognizing ways to build engaging social media into public relations campaigns. 	Individuals who are new to public relations or anyone wishing to refresh their public relations skills.
Creating Well- Constructed Sentences	Percipio	 Parts of a sentence, such as the subject and predicate. Phrases and clauses. Subject-verb agreement. How to identify and fix common sentence errors. 	Individuals at any level who want to refresh or refine their basic writing skills.

FSI Distance Learning Writing Skills Courses

Using the Parts of Speech	Percipio	 Identifying the parts of speech in a sentence. Recognizing the correct use of nouns in sentences. Identifying correct use of perfect and progressive tenses. Recognizing how modal verbs are used in sentences. Distinguishing between active and passive voice Recognizing the correct use of adjectives and adverbs in given sentences. 	Anyone who wants to refresh or refine basic business grammar skills for any purpose, from emails and memos to reports and presentations.
Abbreviating, Capitalizing, and Using Numbers	Percipio	 Recognizing the correct application of basic rules for abbreviating and capitalizing words. Identifying correct abbreviations of given words. Identifying appropriate capitalization for headings, lists, and colons. Recognizing the correct application of number rules. Identifying correct use of numbers in examples. 	Anyone who wants to refresh or refine basic business grammar skills for any purpose, from emails and memos to reports and presentations.
Writing Effective Emails and Instant Messages	Percipio	 Recognizing the appropriate use of rules of etiquette related to tone and formatting in emails. Recognize the rules of etiquette for answering emails. Identifying appropriate ways to use the "From" field and subject line in emails. Recognizing effective ways to write the parts of an email. Identifying guidelines for keeping emails concise. Recognizing appropriate usage of basic rules for instant messaging. 	Individuals at any level who wish to refresh and refine email skills.
Getting the Details Right: Spelling Basics	Percipio	 How to spell words with prefixes and suffixes. How to form the plural and possessive forms of words. General rules on how to spell correctly. 	Individuals at any level who wish to refresh and refine their spelling.